



from the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee
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Initial results from 4K program grants show improvements in quality resulting from teacher-child interaction measures

Columbia – Today, researchers from the University of South Carolina and Clemson University presented their first evaluation report of the eight school district grantees, who were awarded grants in 2015-16 through the South Carolina Community Block Grant for Education Pilot Program. The goal of the grants was to improve the quality of prekindergarten programs. Across all eight districts, pre-kindergarten classrooms demonstrated improved teacher-child interaction from Fall 2016 to Spring 2017, based on assessment results. In three school districts, positive outcomes were observed leading to improved student assessment scores, reduced disciplinary actions, and improved communication between parents and children.

“Young children's relationships with teachers predict future emotional, social and academic success,” said lead evaluator Dr. Leigh D’Amico. “In studies of teacher-child relationships, children who had a secure relationship with their preschool and kindergarten teachers demonstrated good peer interactions and positive relationships with teachers and peers in elementary school.

The one-year block grant program is a matching grants initiative designed to encourage sustainable partnerships among South Carolina school districts and community groups. Proviso 1.78 of the 2015-16 General Appropriations Act focused the program on “improving children’s readiness for kindergarten by enhancing the quality of state-funded full day 4K programs and instruction.” Awarded school districts for this program include Cherokee, Chesterfield, Clarendon 2, Florence 1, Florence 2, Jasper, Lexington 3 and Spartanburg 7. The awards ranged from \$194,466 to \$250,000.

Across the eight districts, 3,050 students were served within 33 schools and in 160 classrooms. Approximately 300 professional learning activities occurred for professionals, which were targeted at improving pre-kindergarten education. While the awarded projects’ strategies and approaches vary, all grantees focused on literacy/language development and some focused on additional domains of development such as numeracy and social-emotional development. Districts reported successes which included increased teacher commitment/engagement, improved instruction, enhanced family engagement, and higher quality classroom environments. Promising practices were observed in three districts. In Florence 1, reduced disciplinary actions were reported. Spartanburg 7 saw improved student assessment scores and in Cherokee County School District, the interventions improved parent and child verbal communication.

In addition to sharing information about the success of teacher-child interaction strategies in 4K classrooms, the EOC continues to require grantees to implement teacher-child interaction assessments

as well as explore additional funding streams to encourage the use of such assessments across all publicly-funded Pre-K classrooms in SC. The deadline for the third cycle of block grant funding is November 1, 2017; interested school districts should contact Bunnie Ward, EOC Director of Policy Development and Evaluation at (803) 734-6148.

The SC Education Oversight Committee is an independent, non-partisan group made up of 18 educators, business persons, and elected leaders. Created in 1998, the committee is dedicated to reporting facts, measuring change, and promoting progress within South Carolina's education system.

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